

SCPD opposes variance request: MassDOT Project Number 608605: ADA Retrofits to Curb Ramps along State Highway Layout at Various Locations in the Municipalities of Medford, Somerville, and Woburn

Dear Board Chair Dawn Guarriello and Members of the Architectural Access Board ("AAB" or "Board"):

On behalf of the Somerville Commission for Persons with Disabilities (SCPD), I am writing to express our opposition to the AAB variance application submitted by Greenman-Pedersen, Inc. (GPI) on behalf of the Massachusetts DOT – Highway Division. SCPD respectfully requests the Board to fully consider the comments in this email correspondence as part of its review.

While the Somerville Commission for Persons with Disabilities only has purview over the project area in Somerville, we recommend that the variance requested by MassDOT for Project Number 608605 be denied.

MassDOT does not provide sufficient explanation for the limits of work and how the location of the transition panels to the existing non-compliant sidewalks was selected. SCPD recommends that unless they can provide adequate justification for why extending the project area to abut compliant sidewalk sections is infeasible, this variance should not be granted.

In particular, SCPD notes that there exists an MBTA bus stop shortly outside the northwest corner of the Somerville project area. Given the particular importance of access to public transportation, we recommend that MassDOT be required to extend the project area in this direction at least to beyond the nearby bus stop or to the nearest compliant sidewalk section, whichever is closer.

For these reasons, we respectfully request that the AAB deny this variance request, and instead require that the Petitioner provide meaningful permanent accessibility to this area. Thank you very much for your attention to this matter. If you have any questions or need any additional information, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Bonnie Denis
Chair, Somerville Commission for Persons with Disabilities